

AMENDED IN SENATE APRIL 22, 2003

AMENDED IN SENATE MARCH 24, 2003

**SENATE BILL**

**No. 606**

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**Introduced by Senator Vasconcellos**  
**(Coauthors: Senators *Alpert, Karnette, McPherson, Morrow,***  
***Speier, and Vincent*)**  
**(Coauthor: Assembly Member Diaz)**

February 20, 2003

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An act to amend Section 49455 of the Education Code, relating to pupil health.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 606, as amended, Vasconcellos. Pupil health: vision appraisal.

(1) Existing law requires, upon first enrollment in a California school district of a pupil at a California elementary school, and at least every 3rd year thereafter until the pupil has completed the 8th grade, the pupil's vision to be appraised by the school nurse or other authorized person, as specified.

This bill would also require that if a vision appraisal is conducted, each pupil is to receive a notice and questionnaire regarding the pupil's vision, which he or she would be instructed to deliver to his or her parent or guardian. *The bill would provide that the notice and questionnaire may be included with any other written communication sent to a parent or guardian at the beginning of the school year.* By imposing additional duties on school districts relating to vision appraisals, this bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

(2) The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state.

Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that no reimbursement is required by this act for a specified reason.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes. State-mandated local program: yes.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

1 SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the  
2 following:

3 (a) The people of California recognize the significance of  
4 ensuring that each and every pupil is tested periodically for vision  
5 acuity.

6 (b) Pupils with treatable vision obstacles that go undiagnosed,  
7 whose parent or guardian may not be aware of alternative  
8 screening measures available to address their specific needs, can  
9 become inattentive, too often underachieve, and are often labeled  
10 as “at-risk” .

11 (c) There is growing evidence that many pupils in the public  
12 education system, and more within the juvenile justice and  
13 correctional systems, who performed poorly in school were  
14 affected by undiagnosed vision problems including letter  
15 reversals, lack of eye-teaming, poor focusing, eye tracking, and  
16 visual perception difficulty that went undiagnosed based upon the  
17 current standards for vision testing.

18 (d) ~~Vision-acuity~~ *Good vision* consists of more than 20/20  
19 eyesight and the standard for vision screening should maximize  
20 the potential for diagnosing treatable vision problems at a time  
21 critical to making a difference to the pupil’s educational  
22 development by addressing a pupil’s ability to understand and  
23 interpret visual information.

24 SEC. 2. Section 49455 of the Education Code is amended to  
25 read:

26 49455. (a) Upon first enrollment in a California school  
27 district of a pupil at a California elementary school, and at least  
28 every third year thereafter until the pupil has completed the eighth  
29 grade, the pupil’s vision shall be appraised by the school nurse or  
30 other authorized person described in Section 49452. This  
31 evaluation shall include tests for visual acuity and color vision;



1 however, color vision shall be appraised once and only on male  
2 pupils, and the results of the appraisal shall be entered in the health  
3 record of the pupil. Color vision appraisal need not begin until the  
4 male pupil has reached the first grade. Gross external observation  
5 of the pupil's eyes, visual performance, and perception shall be  
6 performed by the school nurse and the classroom teacher.

7 (b) (1) Upon the performance of an appraisal pursuant to  
8 subdivision (a), each pupil shall receive a notice and questionnaire  
9 regarding the pupil's vision. Each pupil shall be instructed to  
10 deliver the notice and questionnaire to his or her parent or  
11 guardian. The notice and questionnaire shall contain the following  
12 language:

13  
14 "Dear Parent or Guardian:

15  
16 Your child's ability to see clearly and to accurately interpret  
17 visual information is crucial to his or her learning and success in  
18 school. To aid in identifying additional vision-related difficulties  
19 that may not have been discovered through existing visual health  
20 testing procedures at your child's school, but may merit treatment  
21 by a qualified health care professional, the Legislature has passed  
22 a law requiring that this notice and questionnaire be sent home  
23 with your child if he or she has received vision acuity or color  
24 visual screening at their school.

25 This notice contains a questionnaire that you are encouraged to  
26 complete.

27 PLEASE IDENTIFY ANY OF THE FOLLOWING  
28 STATEMENTS THAT DESCRIBE YOUR CHILD:

29 Your child is behind by one or more grade levels in school.

30 Your child's school performance is not up to his or her potential.

31 Your child complains of blurred vision while reading and  
32 writing.

33 Your child uses a finger or fingers as a marker when reading.

34 Your child makes frequent reversals when reading and writing.

35 Your child skips and rereads words or letters.

36 Your child omits or confuses small words when reading.

37 Your child frowns or squints to see.

38 Your child turns or tilts his or head in order to use one eye only.

39 Your child avoids close work or detailed activities.

40 Your child reads in dim light.

- 1 Your child loses place while reading.
- 2 Your child holds reading materials closer than normal.
- 3 Your child is bothered by glare from a page.
- 4 Your child is sensitive to bright light.
- 5 Your child reports the sensation of his or her eyes ‘not working
- 6 together.’
- 7 One of your child’s eyes turns inward, outward, upward, or
- 8 downward at any time.
- 9 Your child tires of looking at materials closely in a short amount
- 10 of time.
- 11 Your child reports pain around or in either or both of his or her
- 12 eyes.
- 13 Your child has red, irritated eyes or eyelids.
- 14 Your child experiences excessive tearing of his or her eyes.
- 15 Your child rubs his or her eyes frequently.
- 16 Your child closes or covers one eye in bright light or during
- 17 visual tasks.
- 18 After reading or close work, your child’s distance vision is
- 19 blurry.
- 20 Your child notices that print swims, moves, floats, or doubles.
- 21 Your child sees double (two of a single thing).
- 22 Your child gets headaches with eye use.
- 23 Your child experiences difficulty with eye-hand-body
- 24 coordination.
- 25 Your child tends to bump into objects.
- 26 IF THE ANSWER WAS ‘YES’ TO TWO OR MORE OF THE
- 27 STATEMENTS ABOVE, YOU ARE ENCOURAGED TO
- 28 SHOW THIS QUESTIONNAIRE TO, AND HAVE YOUR
- 29 CHILD ASSESSED BY, A QUALIFIED ~~HEALTH~~ EYE CARE
- 30 PROFESSIONAL.”
- 31
- 32 *(2) The notice and questionnaire required pursuant to this*
- 33 *subdivision may be sent separately, as provided in paragraph (1),*
- 34 *or included with any other written communication to a parent or*
- 35 *guardian sent at the beginning of the school year.*
- 36 (c) The evaluation and screening performed pursuant to this
- 37 section may be waived, if the pupil’s parents so desire, by their
- 38 presenting of a certificate from a physician and surgeon or an
- 39 optometrist setting out the results of a determination of the pupil’s
- 40 vision, including visual acuity and color vision.



1 (d) This section does not apply to any pupil whose parents or  
2 guardian file with the principal of the school in which the pupil is  
3 enrolling, a statement in writing that they adhere to the faith or  
4 teachings of a well-recognized religious sect, denomination, or  
5 organization and in accordance with its creed, tenets, or principles  
6 depend for healing upon prayer in the practice of their religion.

7 SEC. 3. It is the intent of the Legislature that funds  
8 appropriated to implement existing vision appraisal services shall  
9 be used to support the requirements imposed by subdivision (b) of  
10 Section 49455 of the Education Code.

11 SEC. 4. State and federal funds appropriated in support of  
12 pupil vision appraisals or screening programs, including, but not  
13 limited to, funds made available through an appropriate item in the  
14 annual Budget Act, shall be considered additional revenue in  
15 accordance with subdivision (e) of Section 17556 of the  
16 Government Code and shall be used to offset any state-mandated  
17 local costs incurred by school districts when complying with this  
18 article.

19 SEC. 5. No reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to  
20 Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution because  
21 this act provides for additional revenue that is in an amount  
22 sufficient to fund the cost of the state mandate within the meaning  
23 of Section 17556 of the Government Code.

